



Building Farm-friendly Knox and Lincoln Counties



Community Tools and Ideas to Better Support Our Farmers

Presented December 4, 2013
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Sponsoring Organizations and Funders

American Farmland Trust

Maine Farmland Trust

Mainewatch Institute

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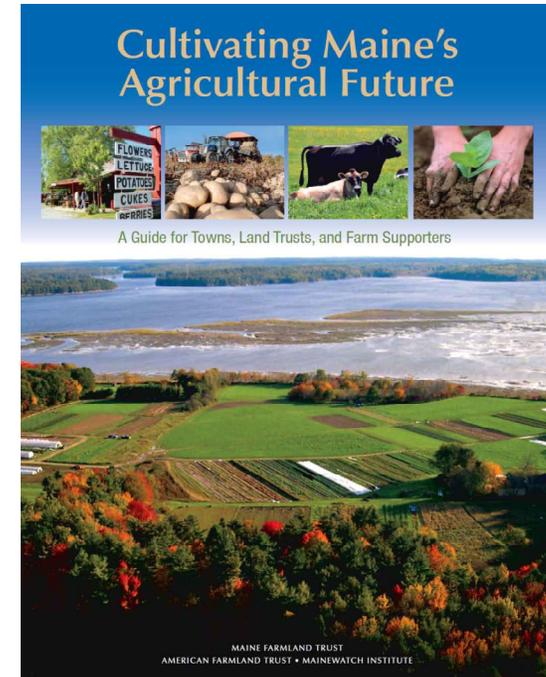
Elmina B. Sewall Foundation

Horizon Foundation, Inc.

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Maine Department of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Resources

Maine Outdoor Heritage Fund





Cultivating Maine's Agricultural Future covers:

- The Benefits of Local Farms and Farming
- Who Can Keep Farms and Farmland Working?
- Case Studies – Maine Regions and Towns Supporting Agriculture
- Tools and Strategies for Supporting Local Agriculture

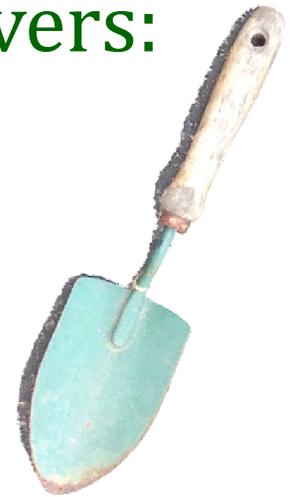


Photo: Bridget Besaw



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MFT's Building Farm-friendly Communities Program



- Share the guide through outreach presentations to broad audiences
- Build a website with resources and information
- Offer no-cost technical assistance to communities to implement tools and strategies

Photo: Bridget Besaw



Complement to other MFT Programs

- Farmland Conservation
- Farm Viability
- FarmLink

Photo: Amanda Bunker





10 Ways You Can Help Your Community Be More Farm-Friendly

There are many other ways, too!



1. Form an Ag Working Group or Commission

- Create a town or regional agricultural commission to serve as the “voice” of agriculture in your community
- Can be formal commission or informal task force
- Can tackle one issue or take a broader approach to building community support for farming



Photo by Brian Kent



2. Know Your Farmers



Photo: Brian Kent

Actively survey or informally interview farmers and large landowners in your community to learn:

- Who is farming and what are they producing?
- Are there urgent issues that your town or city needs to address?
- Is there interest in farmland protection?



Photo: Bridget Besaw



3. Comprehensive Planning

Comprehensive plans describe a town’s vision for the future, set policies and goals, and establish short and long-term implementation strategies.



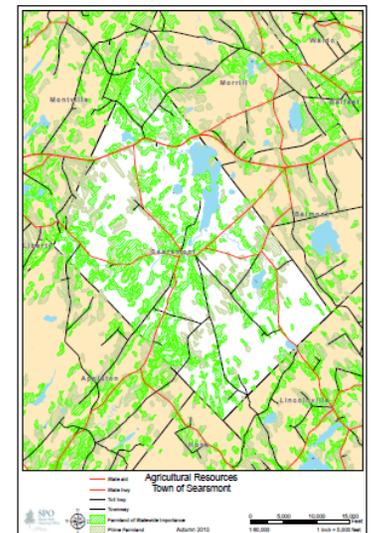
Make sure to include the importance of farming and farmland in the sections on:

- Economy
- Wildlife habitat
- Existing land use
- Scenic resources

And perhaps discuss a local food policy or food security issues?



Photo: Brian Kent





4. Land Use Ordinances

- *Flexibility* for uses and signage is critical
- *Allow farmers to process* their products on site



Photo: Bridget Besaw



Photo: Brian Kent

- *Require new developments* to create buffers from active farmland – don't make the farmer use good farmland for a buffer strip
- *Let small farms put up a new barn* without requiring full site plan review

Don't zone out farming!



Land Use Ordinances

Agricultural Overlay Districts

Agriculture overlay districts are one way in which a town can show its support for farming. A town can:

- Create **farm enterprise overlay areas** with streamlined permitting (or site plan review), buffering and flexibility of uses
- Create overlays to **protect important farm soils** for future generations based on productive agricultural soils and contiguous areas of active farms
- Or create a district that does both!



Photo: Bridget Besaw



5. Municipal tax programs

Farmland

- 5 contiguous acres
- annual gross farm income or value of farm products consumed by household of \$2,000 or more



Photo: Amanda Bunker

Open Space

- additional reduction if allow public access



Photo: Bridget Besaw

Tree growth

- 10 acres and a forest management plan



Voluntary Municipal Farm Support

A town can develop and adopt a local program that lowers property taxes on participating farms. This program:



Photo: Amanda Bunker

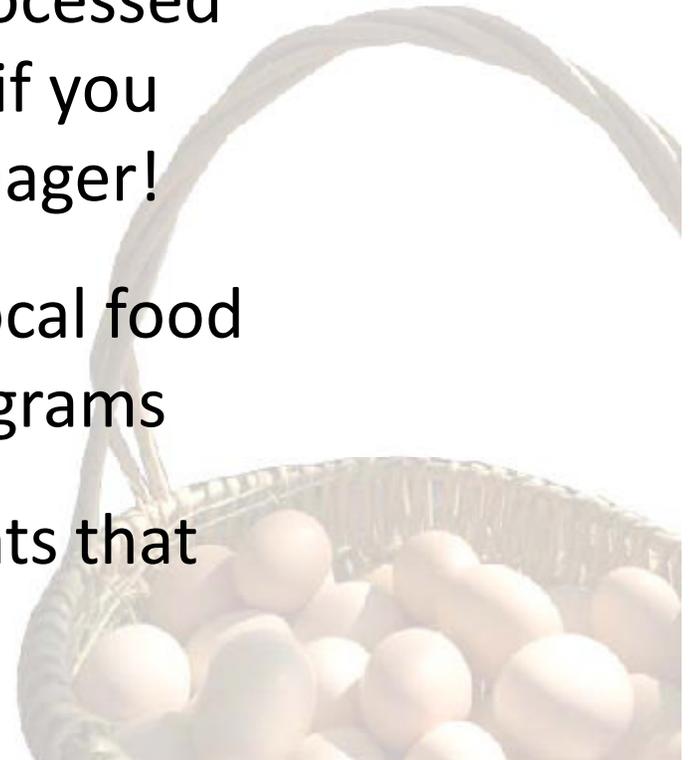
- Ensures that land continues to be farmed for at least 20 years
- Goes beyond the reduction available through current use taxation
- May be crucial to a local farm remaining in business

Farms help keep taxes lower because cows don't go to school!



6. Buy Local Food

- Shop at your local farmers market
- Look for locally grown and processed foods at your grocery store – if you don't see them – ask the manager!
- Find out if your school uses local food in its breakfast and lunch programs
- If you dine out, find restaurants that serve local food



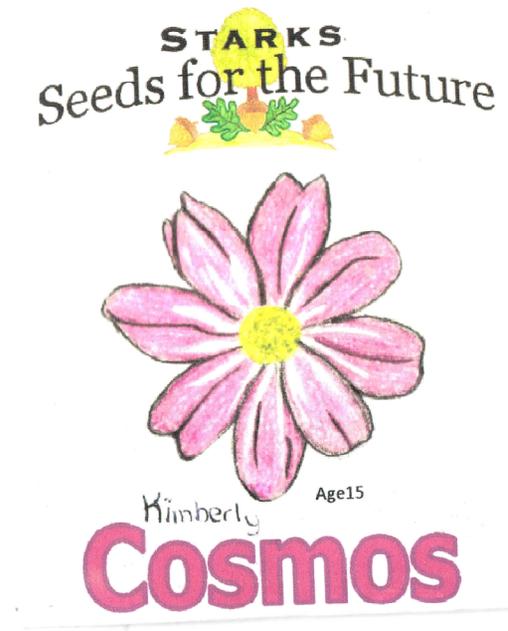


7. Foster Locally Inspired Ideas

Veggies For All a project of the Unity Barn Raisers

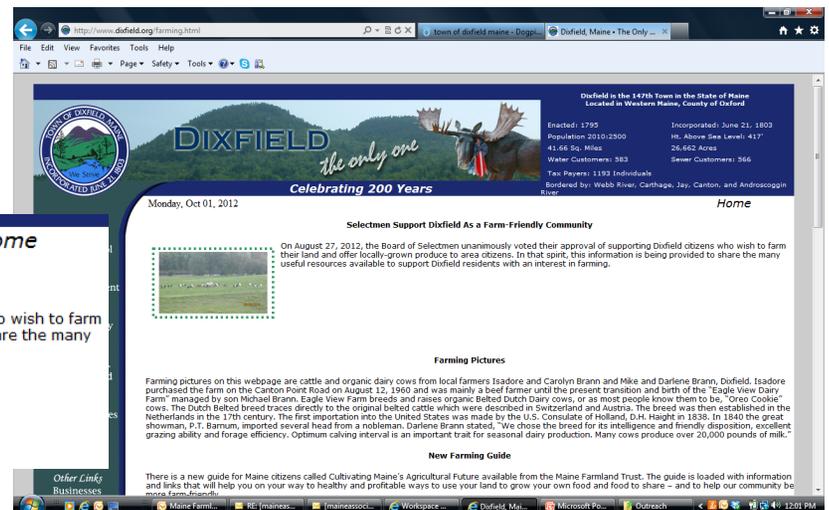
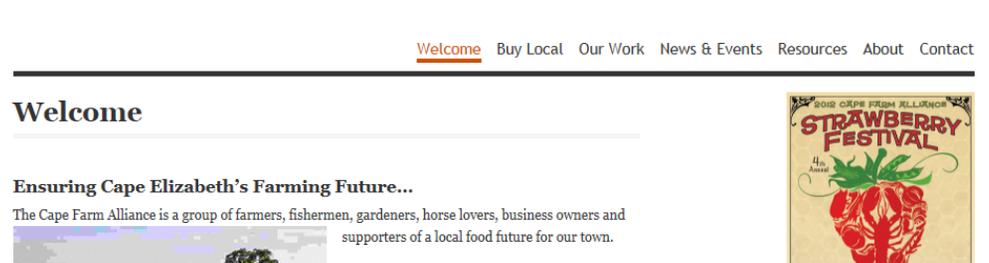


Photo: Amanda Bunker





8. Create a farming webpage on your community website





9. Protect Important Farmland

Permanent Agricultural Conservation Easements

Agricultural conservation easements allow farmers to **voluntarily** protect farmland for future generations. A well-crafted agricultural conservation easement :

- Is customized to a particular farm
- Provides flexibility to the landowner to ensure that the property can always be used for farming – by allowing fencing, land clearing and farm buildings
- Keeps protected land in private ownership and on the tax rolls, though sometimes at a lower assessed value

Talk with Maine Farmland Trust or your local land trust for more information!



10. LEADERSHIP

You can make a difference!

- Maine communities are locally driven (often by volunteers)
- Each ordinance unique (and you may not succeed the first time you try)
- 1 person can start the conversation
- Patience and persistence are critical!



Photo: Amanda Bunker



Visit the Building Farm-friendly Communities Website

<http://www.maineFarmlandtrust.org/building-farm-friendly-communities/>

First Steps

- ★ Know Your Farmers
- ★ Engage Your Farmers

Local Planning

- ★ Comprehensive Planning
- ★ Open Space or Working Lands Planning

Local Policies and Ordinances

- ★ Tax Policies and Programs
- ★ Urban Agriculture
- ★ Farm Business-friendly Ordinances
- ★ Conserving Important Farmland Soils
- ★ Right to Farm Provisions and General Policy Statements



For tools, tips and examples from other communities in Maine and beyond!

>>>Is Your Town Farm-Friendly?<<<<

>>> Take this **TEST** to find out!<<<<



Does your town need help with farmland issues?

- Does your comprehensive plan highlight the importance of farming in your community?
- Are your land use ordinances farm friendly?
- Is there interest in forming an Agricultural Commission?

Through special grants Maine Farmland Trust is able provide targeted assistance at no cost – ask for a consultation!

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Contact Maine Farmland Trust at:



Photo: Bridget Besaw

97 Main Street

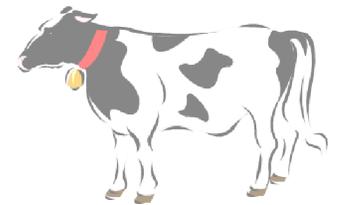
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Thank you for your interest in farming!